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Babbitt Tells Congress Conservation Must Remain Sole Purpose of the Refuge System

"The central, overarching purpose of the National Wildlife Refuge System is, and should be, the conservation of fish, wildlife and their habitat. If we do that job well, then there will be ample opportunity for compatible recreational uses which depend on diverse and abundant wildlife."

With those words, Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt went to bat for the National Wildlife Refuge System before the House Committee on Resources in March. The committee is considering legislation (H.R. 511) that would make hunting, fishing, bird watching and other recreational activities "purposes" of the system. Babbitt said wildlife conservation should be the one and only purpose of the system, and he would recommend the President veto the legislation if it passes Congress.

Babbitt also strongly opposed another bill (H.R. 512) that would require Congress to pass specific legislation before the Service could establish new refuges financed through the Land and Water Conservation Fund. He pointed out that Congress already approves these acquisitions through the appropriations process and the proposed legislation would only impair the creation of new refuges.

"It is difficult to see how these bills will strengthen the refuge system or make the herculean task of refuge management easier for our managers," he told the committee.

Speaking on H.R. 511, Babbitt said the bill "scrambles the crucial distinction between 'purpose' and 'use' that has been at the heart of the refuge philosophy ever since Theodore Roosevelt created our first refuge at Pelican Island."

Hunting, fishing, bird watching, photography and environmental education already are "priority uses" of the system under President Clinton's 1996 executive order on the refuge system. Making them "purposes" of the system could not only undermine conservation but also lead to an endless series of lawsuits, Babbitt said.

"The bill, as I read it, would give groups . . . the right to sue for materially affecting their ability to use a refuge. In other words, under this bill, a bird watcher could sue . . . claiming a hunter is materially interfering with his right which is protected as a purpose of the refuge," he said.

"Similarly, a duck hunter could sue to stop school children from participating in environmental education programs or bird watchers from observing migratory birds on the refuge. The combinations are nearly as numerous as the lawyers looking for work."

Babbitt emphasized that he enthusiastically supports these recreational uses and that hunting and fishing, for example, are allowed on well over half of all refuges. But, he said, the "statutory purpose of the refuge system is, and must remain, singular: the conservation of fish, wildlife and their habitat."

While opposed to two bills as currently written, Babbitt said he was eager to work with the committee to develop omnibus legislation for the refuge system that he could recommend the President support.

Babbitt, Congress Convene Working Group

Secretary Babbitt apparently made Congress an offer it couldn't refuse. House Resources Committee Chairman Don Young of Alaska and other congressional leaders took Babbitt up on his offer to work with them to find common ground for omnibus refuge legislation.

As *Fish and Wildlife News* went to press, Babbitt had begun weekly meetings with a working group that includes congressional staff, Service Director John Rogers, Service Assistant Director for External Affairs Dan Ashe, Rollie Sparrowe of the Wildlife Management Institute, Max Peterson of the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, Dan Beard of the National Audubon Society, and Bill Horn of the Wildlife Legislative Fund of America.

The goal is to develop a bill that Congress can pass and that Babbitt can recommend the President sign.

*Don Barry
Acting Assistant Secretary for
Fish and Wildlife and Parks*



Service Dedicates State-of-the-Art Visitor Center at Wichita Mountains NWR

The Kiowa Indians of Oklahoma once had a prophetic vision that the buffalo that grazed the plains would one day disappear and then, sometime later, return in great numbers.

The Service celebrated the fulfillment of that vision in December with the dedication of a spectacular new visitor center at Wichita Mountain NWR, where indeed the buffalo and a host of other Great Plains wildlife have come back in abundance.

More than 100 dignitaries, including Sen. Don Nickles of Oklahoma, braved blowing snow to attend the dedication of the 22,000-square-foot center, which required six years of planning and two years of construction.

Nickles, the principal force in getting funding through Congress for the center, praised the close working relationship he enjoyed with the Service in planning a facility "all Americans will be proud of."

"It's nice to see something we do that will have tangible impact on future generations," Nickles said. "[The refuge] is a tremendous asset for our state and our country. It is a part of our national heritage. To invest a few dollars to protect that heritage is a very good investment, indeed."

More than 200,000 people a year are expected to tour the center, which employs a mixture of fine art and natural exhibits to teach visitors about the refuge's wildlife and habitat. A 30-foot long, 10-foot high ceramic mural of the refuge's four big herbivores (bison, elk, longhorn cattle and white-tailed deer) graces one wall.

In addition, a series of dioramas depicts the refuge's plants and animals in illustration, photography, sculpture and taxidermy.

The refuge's four habitats also are highlighted: rocklands, with the sounds of canyon wrens and bugling elk; aquatic, with a stream frozen, not in ice, but in time; mixed-grass prairie, with a terrascoppe peering into the burrows of prairie dogs; and cross timbers, which teaches about the relationship between naturally occurring fires and the endangered black-capped vireo. Each exhibit also instructs visitors about the Service's conservation work and management techniques.

The center's 112-seat auditorium showed the premiere of "Legend of the Buffalo," a video produced by the refuge and Ft. Sill Military Reservation. The tape tells about the Kiowa prophecy and documents the efforts of William Hornaday, head of the New York Zoological Society, in searching for and donating 15 bison in 1907 to be the nucleus of the Wichita herd. The tape ends with the prophecy being fulfilled with a network of lands, the National Wildlife Refuge System.

"There's more to this facility than just rooms and exhibits," Southeast Regional Director Nancy Kaufman told the crowd. "I hope you will find we've captured some of the beauty and the wonder of this special place."

Dennis Prichard
Wichita Mountains NWR
Indianola, Oklahoma

Panda Presentation



Former Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks J. Craig Potter presents Secretary Babbitt with a plaque commemorating the opening of the San Diego Zoo's state-of-the-art Giant Panda Research Station last fall. Babbitt helped the zoo obtain the pertinent permits to allow two giant pandas to be loaned to the zoo from China.

Potter, now an attorney representing the zoo, said the cooperative effort involving the Service, the zoo and various Chinese officials, "signified a major breakthrough in cooperative international research affecting the severely endangered giant panda." At left is Assistant Director for International Affairs Marshall Jones, and at right is Acting Deputy Director Jay Gerst. Photo by Tami Heilemann.

Grand Tour

Southwest Regional Director Nancy Kaufman tours Wichita Mountains NWR's new visitor center with Sen. Don Nickles of Oklahoma, President Teddy Roosevelt (James Foote), and Rep. J.C. Watts of Oklahoma. Photo by USFWS.



On the Horizon

Upcoming Issues
Affecting the Service's Mission

International Migratory Bird Day: Silent Spring Redux

Thirty-five years have passed since former Service employee Rachel Carson wrote *Silent Spring*, but, despite notable progress, many migratory bird populations are in decline. This year's International Migratory Bird Day on May 10 will, as always, be a celebration of the joys of birds and bird watching, but it also will highlight the problem of pesticides, habitat loss and fragmentation, and other threats to birds and other wildlife. The day will feature hundreds of events at refuges and other birding areas across the country.

Arctic Ecosystems Threatened by Snow Geese

The Service is trying to find a solution to a population explosion among snow geese, estimated to be at least 5 percent a year, that is threatening the arctic nesting grounds they share with many other bird species. The birds are destroying the fragile ecosystems by consuming the vegetation. The Migratory Bird Management Office believes changes in agricultural practices and the increased availability of habitat have increased winter survival rates. Liberalizing hunting regulations has done little to stop the explosion, so the Service is looking for other alternatives.

Titanium Mining Next to Okefenokee NWR?

DuPont Corporation has discovered titanium deposits next to Okefenokee NWR and is seeking to mine an area three miles wide and 30 miles long. The Service is concerned about the potential impact of the project on the hydrology and water quality of the Okefenokee Swamp and St. Mary's River and other potential environmental problems. The mining operation would include clearing of vegetation and dredging down to 50 feet below ground level. DuPont is preparing to file for the necessary applications and hopes to start mining in 2002.

Endangered Species Act Reauthorization: Search for Common Ground

Congressional leaders and the administration apparently have reached the conclusion that the reauthorization of the Endangered Species Act is unlikely unless both sides work together to craft compromise legislation. Senators Kempthorne of Idaho and Chafee of Rhode Island have been circulating a draft bill that Secretary Babbitt has already said the administration opposes in its current form. A Service working group is meeting with the senators' staffs. In a letter to the editor that appeared in the *Providence Journal-Bulletin*, Babbitt wrote the bill "is a starting point from which people acting in good faith can begin." Currently, it is uncertain when the senators plan to introduce their bill.

Oil Discovered Next to Arctic NWR

British Exploration Inc. and Chevron Corp. have discovered what they are calling "economically developable" deposits of oil in a field just outside the border of the Arctic NWR. The field, called Sourdough Prospect, is owned by the state of Alaska. The discovery seems likely to reignite the longstanding debate over oil drilling on the refuge. Secretary Babbitt reaffirmed the administration's opposition to drilling on the refuge. "We intend to work with the state, BP Exploration, and Chevron USA to ensure the development of the Sourdough Prospect can be done in a manner that will not cause adverse impacts" to the refuge and the rich biological resources of region, he said.

Texas Honors Mollie Beattie

The state of Texas honored former director Mollie Beattie last fall by naming a stretch of Mustang Island near Corpus Christi the "Mollie Beattie Coastal Habitat Community."

The property, managed by the Texas General Land Office, features intertidal habitat used by shorebirds, including the threatened piping plover, and provides an ideal site for environmental education and wildlife-related recreation. It is the first property to be entered into the agency's "Adopt-A-Habitat" program, to showcase habitat management for sensitive species on state lands.

In 1994, Beattie and Garry Mauro, who heads the Land Office and served as president of the Western States Land Commissioners Association, agreed to work together to find ways for state land offices to actively support the Endangered Species Act.

The Land Office launched its "Adopt-A-Habitat" program last year, signing a Memorandum of Understanding with the Service. Under the agreement, the Service will assist the office in identifying and managing additional state lands for wildlife.

At a dedication ceremony, Mauro echoed one of Beattie's favorite themes. "As the largest land manager in Texas, I am convinced that environmental concerns and the economic development of land can be compatible," he said. "That's what the Mollie Beattie Habitat Community is about."

Special Dedication

Garry Mauro presents Nancy Kaufman with an artist's rendering of the Mollie Beattie Coastal Habitat Community. "All of us in the Fish and Wildlife Service are honored to assist with this effort," Kaufman said. "We're especially honored that the first area selected for your Adopt-A-Habitat Program is named for Mollie Beattie." Photo by Texas GLO.



Buckle Up for IMPACT of New Training Center

Brick by brick, stone by stone, building by building, the new National Conservation Training Center in Shepherdstown, West Virginia, is nearing expected completion later this year. It won't take long for Service supervisors and managers to feel the impact of the new center.

"Impact," in fact, is the name of the center's first order of business, a newly developed two-week learning program that will be directed towards every Service manager from project leaders to assistant directors to regional directors. The two-week program will emphasize three interconnected themes: team work, outreach, and awareness of self and others.

"This course will give us a unique opportunity to review what we are all about and how we can best use our collective strengths to improve our effectiveness as conservationists," said Acting Director John Rogers. "We've witnessed some extraordinary changes over the years. 'Impact' will give us a chance to take a serious look at ourselves, our capacities for teamwork and our effectiveness in communicating with the public."

The center's staff conducted extensive surveys with project leaders and other senior managers last summer as part of designing the course. "The survey respondents raised very substantive issues, and the Oversight Committee has given us the green light to take those issues on," said NCTC Director Rick Lemon. "Off-the-shelf training programs simply won't do for an endeavor of this scope."

The first "Impact" (Involving and Motivating People to Achieve Conservation Teamwork) course is tentatively scheduled for September, and current plans call for 10 two-week sessions, each with 80 people. Most of the training will be conducted in small groups with some larger plenary sessions. All supervisors and managers will be required to take the course by 1999.

The student population in any session will represent the widest cross-section of the Service possible, with every region, program and management level represented. The sessions will be offered, on average, at four week intervals.

Located on 540 acres on the south bank of the Potomac River, the training center's high-tech training facilities will reflect the region's architecture, including the great stone Commons Building.

"The center will be a world-class training facility, make no mistake about that," Rogers said. "But I don't want people distracted by the physical plant. The center's product and its benefit to our employees are what will be most important, first, last and always."

Further information about "Impact" will be featured in future issues of *Fish and Wildlife News*, as well as on the Service's Homepage.

Mike Smith, NCTC
Shepherdstown, West Virginia

A Job Well Done

Acting Director John Rogers stands with award winners honored at a March reception at the North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference in Washington. Next to Rogers, left to right, are: Vernon Ricker, a special agent in Salisbury, Maryland, who won the Guy Bradley Award, presented by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to the outstanding conservation law enforcement officer; Judy Dryja, a volunteer at Merritt Island refuge in Titusville, Florida, and Bill Buchanan, a volunteer at John Heinz



Stonewalling It

A workman builds a wall at the National Conservation Training Center in Shepherdstown, West Virginia. The center's stately architecture complements the style of the surrounding community. Photo by Steve Hillebrand.

NWR at Tinicum in Philadelphia, who were named refuge volunteers of the year by the National Wildlife Refuge Association and the National Audubon Society; Jack Jeffrey, a wildlife biologist at Hakalau NWR in Hilo, Hawaii, named as refuge employee of the year; and Lou Hinds, manager of J.N. "Ding" Darling NWR in Sanibel, Florida, who was presented the Paul Kroegel Award for dedication and effectiveness as a refuge manager. Photo by Tami Heilemann.



Native American Liaison Office: A New Approach to Help Field Offices Work with Tribes

When Service endangered species biologists sat down the White Mountain Apache nation of Arizona to discuss a recovery plan for the Mexican spotted owl two years ago, it marked a sea change in the relationship between the Service and Native American tribes.

Instead of developing a plan and presenting it as a done deal, the Service asked the tribe to participate in the process from the start. The result was a plan that not only is consistent with the needs of the tribe but also benefits from the tribe's traditional knowledge and conservation resources.

The change in the Service's approach, which had long been sought by Native Americans, stemmed from a memorandum from President Clinton instructing federal agencies to deal with tribes on a government-to-government basis. At the direction of Secretary Babbitt, the Service established the Native American Liaison Office to help field offices work with tribes on often-complicated issues such as permitting, contracting, water rights and Endangered Species Act enforcement.

One of the office's primary responsibilities is to assist regional offices in negotiating agreements with tribes to participate in the management of refuges near tribal lands. These formal contracts, called annual funding agreements, clearly define both the Service's and the tribe's financial and management responsibilities on a refuge.

The liaison office, for example, currently is assisting Region 6 in efforts to negotiate an agreement between the Salish and Kootenai tribes and the National Bison Range in Montana. The office has put together a handbook on annual funding agreements for field offices. It should be available this spring.

The office also helps refuge managers accommodate tribal religious practices on sacred Indian sites on refuge land. Tribes must obtain Service permits if activities on sacred sites on refuges involve collecting of plants, gathering of animal parts such as feathers or clearing of habitat. However, under the President's executive order, refuges must accommodate the tribal use of the land and avoid affecting the physical integrity of sacred sites to the extent practicable.

The liaison office has outlined a strategy for administering this policy and recently convened a task force of Service personnel to discuss it. After formal tribal consultations on the strategy, it will be made available to field stations in a guidance memorandum.

The office also has been working closely with the National Marine Fisheries Service to develop rules for enforcing the Endangered Species Act on tribal lands, including guidelines for developing recovery plans.

Policy guidance on ESA enforcement in the form of a joint Interior/Commerce Secretarial Order is expected to be distributed shortly. The Native American Liaison Office will consult with regions on how to carry out the order and negotiate ESA issues with tribal governments. For more information, the office's telephone number is 202/208 4133.

*Duncan Brown
Native American Liaison Office
Washington*



Anchorage Struggles with Deadly Threat



Unlike many cities in the Lower 48, Anchorage doesn't have a problem with resident Canada geese. Instead, the city is being overrun by the migratory variety. These pesky geese have found the city's mowed lawns, plentiful lakes and scarcity of predators ideal for nesting.

The geese have become more than just a nuisance. In September 1995, 24 Air Force crew members died when their aircraft collided with a flock of geese while taking off from Elmendorf Air Force Base outside the city. Last spring, a school bus drove off the road in Anchorage attempting to avoid a flock of geese.

Goose droppings also have started a domino effect by adding nitrogen to the water. This causes algae to grow, consuming the oxygen in the water and leading to foul smells. In addition, the birds can transmit diseases such as swimmer's itch, chlamydia and parasites to other birds and mammals, including humans.

To address the problem, the Service has joined a coalition of federal, state and local agencies and organizations called the Anchorage Waterfowl Working Group. The group recently published a White Paper that lists some potential solutions, including altering habitat on public lands and encouraging private landowners to do the same. For a copy of the White Paper, contact Karen Laing at 907/786 3459.

*Connie Barclay
Public Affairs, Anchorage*

New Design Standards for Publications

The Service Directorate recently approved universal design standards that will ensure all Service publications have a consistent, easily identifiable, professional appearance.

The standards include guidelines on common sizes, general formats in design and content, and typography, as well as an emphasis on high-quality, full-color photographs of wildlife as a hallmark of our major publications.

In the past, each office or program developed their own graphic layouts for each publication and the results often bore no resemblance to each other. The new standards are aimed at bringing about a "Service identity" in agency publications, while still allowing enough flexibility for graphic artists to design publications so they are appropriate to the message and the content.

The standards were developed during a two-day meeting of Service graphic designers and printing personnel held in Minneapolis last fall. The starting point for the standards were mockups done by Massimo Vignelli of Vignelli Associates, an internationally renowned graphic design firm in New York. Following the meeting, the representatives forwarded the proposal to the Service Directorate for approval at its December meeting in Tuscon, Arizona.

Regional and program publication coordinators are responsible for helping Service offices meet the new standards. The Directorate made the Publications Design Committee a standing committee that will meet within the next six months to evaluate the implementation of the guidelines, weigh any problems that crop up and suggest revisions.

*Craig Rieben
Public Affairs, Washington*

Fish & Wildlife News Wants You!

Got a story to tell? An interesting photograph to share? *Fish and Wildlife News* wants to hear from you. It is easy to submit an article or photographs. Just e-mail the article to the editor, Hugh Vickery, or send him the photographs at Public Affairs Office, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Room 3447, 1849 C Street NW, Washington, DC 20240. We're getting a lot of material, so not everything can be published.

Here are some guidelines that will give you the best chance:

- Articles should be submitted through your regional public affairs office.
- Keep the articles short, no more than 400 words in most cases. (Obviously not every story can be told that succinctly.)
- Write in a breezy, conversational style. Use active verbs. For example, write "biologists restored the wetland," rather than "the wetland was restored by biologists."
- Answer the five W's – who, what, where, when and why – at the beginning of your story.
- Be yourself when you write. Express yourself the way you would if you were talking to a neighbor.
- People are interested in people. Write about what people are doing on the ground through the programs rather than just about the programs.
- Avoid jargon. For example, if you have to mention Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, explain what it does so a sixth grader could understand it.
- Cite examples. If you have a wonderful program, go into detail about a particular project as an example of that program. It is often good to begin a story with an example, then talk about the program as a whole.
- Humorous stories are welcome.
- Submitting a good photograph with your story will greatly enhance your chance of having it published. Easy-to-understand charts or other kinds of graphics that illustrate the story also are helpful.
- Send photographs (color and black-and-white are both acceptable) or slides that have action in them and illustrate your story. For example, if your story is about wetland restoration, you might send a photograph of Service employees in hip-waders restoring a wetland.
- Avoid shots of people shaking hands and smiling at ceremonies (so-called grip-and-grin shots) or a speaker behind a podium.
- Make sure the photograph is clear enough, with enough lighting, to reproduce well. Watch out for shadows. A shadow from the bill of a cap can obscure a person's face, especially when the photo is reproduced.

Service publications, before

After



Salton Sea Epidemic Linked to Sick Fish

Biologists believe they may have solved the mystery behind an outbreak of avian botulism that killed more than 14,000 birds, including 1,200 endangered brown pelicans, at Salton Sea NWR last summer and fall.

The U.S. Geological Survey's Biological Resources Division tentatively concluded that the epidemic could be traceable to widespread deaths of tilapia, an African fish species introduced into the sea. Biologists conducting tests on dead tilapia found acute bacterial infections in every fish.

Avian botulism, which is caused by a toxin produced by an anaerobic bacterium, is considered a disease of waterfowl. It has never before been reported affecting pelicans in such large numbers.

Although the link between bacterial infection in tilapia and botulism poisoning in birds is not proven, USGS scientists suspect the infection may produce conditions in the intestinal tract of sick fish that allow botulism spores to germinate and produce toxin. The spores themselves are likely to be widely present in both the Salton Sea and the fish. The dying fish become easy prey for pelicans, herons, and other fish-eating birds that then ingest fatal doses of toxin.

Unfortunately, as *Fish and Wildlife News* went to press, roughly 10 percent of the 4,000 brown and white pelicans currently on the refuge had begun to exhibit symptoms of avian botulism. The refuge has begun daily airboat patrols to pick up sick and dead birds, reactivated the refuge bird hospital, and contacted Pacific Wildlife Project to arrange for rehabilitation of sick pelicans.

Susan Saul
Public Affairs, Portland, Oregon

Pelican plague. More than 1,200 endangered brown pelicans have died in an avian botulism epidemic at Salton Sea NWR.



Outreach Goes Down Under on the Boston Subway



Underground Bird

A peregrine falcon watches over commuters on the Boston subway courtesy of an outreach poster designed by Mary O'Connor, graphics specialist in the Hadley, Massachusetts, regional office. Photo by Linda Morse.

The Service's outreach program in Region 5 has gone underground... literally.

Last fall, an outreach group came up with a novel idea to help the Service reach its "100 on 100" goal of making 100 percent of the public aware of the National Wildlife Refuge System by its 100th anniversary in 2003 - why not put up posters on the Boston subway?

The brainstorm's author, Juanita Blaskowski of Missisquoi NWR in Vermont, put the wheels in motion with a call to Boston's Park Transit. The Gulf of Maine Ecosystem Team agreed to pay for printing, rental space on the subway cars and use of the refuge division's toll-free telephone line.

The outreach group targeted two of Boston's four subway lines. The Blue line carries people to Logan Airport and the New England Aquarium, and the Orange line carries East Boston residents and college students. Together, they transport 188,000 people a day. One hundred posters provided 50 percent coverage on both subway lines.

Choosing a relevant, eye-catching photo was easy. Boston hosts a resident pair of nesting peregrine falcons. Each year, their young generate extensive media coverage.

So from last December through March, Boston straphangers looked up to see a photograph of the beautiful raptor along with the text: "The peregrine falcon... Boston's resident endangered species. Brought back to you by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, in cooperation with state and local environmental agencies. For more information, call 1 800/344 WILD."

More than 80 people called the toll-free number to receive written information on endangered species. While the ultimate benefits of the poster may be hard to measure, Service employees in New England have expressed great excitement about the Service's increased visibility.

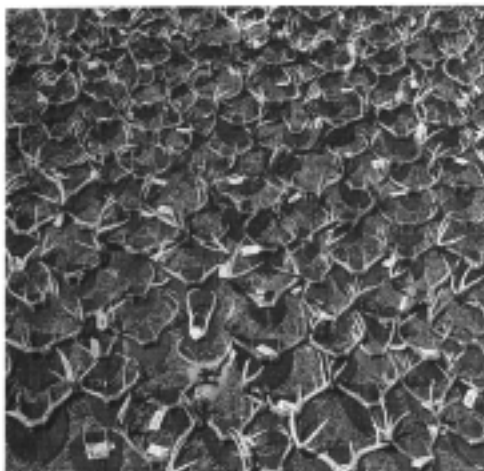
Linda Morse
New England Field Office
Concord, New Hampshire



Snake Talk

Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt, right, discusses the status of the copperbelly water snake at a reclaimed mine site outside of Madisonville, Kentucky, with Service employees, from left to right, Biologist Scott Pruitt, Field Supervisor Dave Hudak and Biologist Alan Ratzlaff. Babbitt joined Kentucky Senator Wendell Ford in January to announce agreements among the department, the coal and agriculture industries, and the states of Indiana, Kentucky, and Illinois to conserve the snake. As a result, the snake was not listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act in its southern range. Photo by Georgia Parham.

Dear Diary: Today I Got Busted for Poaching



Racked Up

Agents found hundreds of white-tailed deer racks among the trophies seized during the investigation of the illegal hunting activities of a Missouri man and his son. Photo by USFWS.

At least Jesse James had enough sense not to keep a diary.

Not so for a Missouri man and his son who might just have set some kind of world record for poaching before they were nabbed by a dogged Service special agent and his state counterpart.

Starting in 1961, real estate agent John Partney and son Andy illegally killed hundreds of white-tailed deer, wild turkey, hawks, coyotes and fish in Missouri. The pair also ventured west to illegally bag elk, bighorn sheep, mule deer and antelope in Wyoming and Montana and even kill elk and bighorn sheep in Yellowstone and Glacier National Parks. Their sole purpose: to obtain as many wildlife trophies as possible.

They might have gotten away with it if the elder Partney hadn't chronicled his crimes in diaries. A copy of one diary found its way into the hands of the Missouri Department of Conservation by way of a disgruntled employee in Partney's office.

Tipped off by the diary, Service Special Agent Dan Burleson and MDC Agent Cheryl Fey posed as interested real estate buyers to begin an association with Partney. As he became acquainted with the couple, Partney began to reveal his hunting experiences. He even allowed Burleson to videotape his vast array of antler racks, turkey beards and other trophies.

After obtaining a federal search warrant for Partney's home and business, Burleson, along with officers from MDC and the National Park Service, recovered more than 200 wildlife mounts, 250 turkey beards, a number of firearms and additional wildlife mounts Partney had concealed at other residences. Agents also found photographs, videotapes and two original diaries documenting the Partneys' violations.

Thanks to Burleson's work, John Partney pleaded guilty to four misdemeanors and three felonies, including violations of the Lacey Act, obstruction of justice and selling ammunition to minors. Andy pleaded guilty to four misdemeanor violations under the Lacey Act.

John Partney received 21 months in federal prison and two years probation, and was fined \$5,000. Andy was sentenced to six months community confinement and two years supervised probation. Both Partneys must pay restitution costs to Glacier National Park and Yellowstone National Park and were banned from all national parks during probation.

The pair also agreed to plead guilty to 40 misdemeanor wildlife violations of state law. Under the state plea, they surrendered all wildlife, photos, maps, and materials associated with illegal killing and paid a total of \$20,000.

Burleson's exemplary work earned him the Department of Justice's Award for Distinguished Service, presented by the Office of the United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Missouri. In recommending the award for Burleson, U.S. Attorney Edward L. Dowd, Jr., said, "Special Agent Dan Burleson's work in the investigation was nothing less than outstanding."

Georgia Parham, External Affairs,
Bloomington, Indiana

Dent in Manatee Population

Last year started off with good news for the Florida manatee. A survey conducted by the Florida Marine Research Institute counted 2,639 manatees, the highest count of the species since statewide surveys began in 1991.

Unfortunately, 1996 turned out to be a bad year for the gentle aquatic mammal. More than 400 manatees died in the United States, setting a new record for mortalities. Many of the deaths were avoidable.

One hundred and fifty-one of these deaths were caused by a naturally-occurring toxin produced by the red tide organism, *Gymnodinium breve*. But last year also was the worst on record for human-related mortalities. Sixty manatees were struck and killed by watercraft, 10 died in water control structures and one drowned in a stormwater pipe. As a result, this year's survey found only 2,229 manatees.

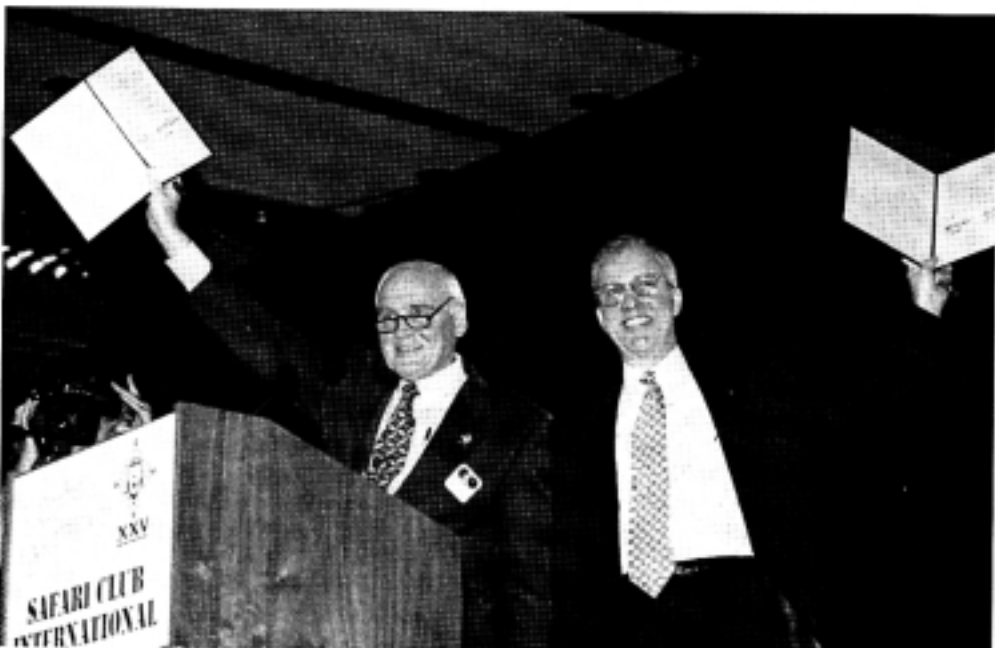
The Service, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection and other private conservation organizations are seeking to protect manatee habitats and reduce human-related mortality. Efforts include the establishment of manatee protection zones to reduce watercraft-related deaths, installation of grates on water control structures to prevent drownings and use of pressure-sensitive devices that automatically open canal gates to release trapped manatees.

Diana Hawkins
Public Affairs, Atlanta



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Safari Club Joins Ranks of Refuge Partners



In January, Safari Club International became the latest in a growing list of organizations to form a partnership with the Service in support of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Bob Easterbrook, president of Safari Club International, joined Acting Director John Rogers in signing a memorandum of understanding opening the way for more cooperation on the local level between the 150 Safari Club chapters and the 509 national wildlife refuges.

Under the agreement, the brainchild of Ray Stroup, a former Interior Department employee who now works for the Safari Club in Wyoming, the club will provide its chapters with a list of refuges and work with them to develop programs to support the missions of refuges in their areas.

Cooperative efforts might include club members volunteering for projects on refuge lands, promotion of the club's Sportsmen Against Hunger project in conjunction with refuge hunting programs, and working together on research and conservation projects for species managed by refuges. Joint programs under the agreement would be eligible for matching grants from the club to its chapters.

On Safari

Bob Easterbrook, president of Safari Club International, and Service Acting Director John Rogers hold up copies of a memorandum of understanding pledging to work together in support of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

The agreement comes on the heels of two similar agreements between the Service and environmental conservation organizations.

The National Audubon Society will encourage its local chapters to "adopt a refuge" and will work with the National Conservation Training Center to develop wildlife education programs. The North American Nature Photography Association will encourage greater use of photography to support refuge environmental education programs.

*Phil Million
Public Affairs, Washington*

Gear Up for National Fishing Week

Are you gearing up for a National Fishing Week event this June 2-8? If so, the National Fishing Week Steering Committee has some new items you may want to add to your tackle box.

Whether you're a special events pro or novice, the Event Planner's Kit is a sure bet to make your fishing week event a success. It includes an action manual, educational activity book, National Fishing Week poster, certificates of accomplishment, and advertising slicks. If you're angling for products children can take home, an "Eat, Sleep, Go Fishing" poster featuring "Garfield," the fat cat cartoon character; a "Garfield" educational coloring book; and "Cool Shades" sunglasses are just a few the committee offers.

National Fishing Week is one of the Service's most successful outreach programs, spawning strong community partnerships that not only offer great fishing but also help foster tomorrow's conservationists. Federal and state agencies, conservation groups, and community organizations are already planning thousands of fishing events that will teach young anglers about fishing and aquatic resources and even give them a chance to cast a line or two.

This year, National Fishing Week highlights the "Hooked on Fishing-Not on Drugs" program. Especially targeting inner city children, "Hooked on Fishing" presents fishing as a healthy hobby, promotes interpersonal skills that encourage a drug-free lifestyle and emphasizes fishing as a sport entire families can enjoy.

To receive a product catalog or place an order, contact the National Fishing Week Steering Committee, 1033 North Fairfax Street, Suite 200 Alexandria, Virginia 22314-1540; telephone 703/684 3201 or 800/972 7233; e-mail amsportfish@delphi.com.

*Janet Tennyson
Public Affairs, Washington*



Mud, Heat, and Hard Work: Adventures as A Service Volunteer

When I was the Service's deputy director, I often wondered about the life of a Service volunteer. I had met many volunteers, primarily at the national wildlife refuges, but those meetings were short and, as an administrator, I never learned about their everyday activities. That all changed last summer when I myself became a volunteer.

I spent the month of August as a bander for the Migratory Bird Management Office in Brooks, Alberta, followed by three weeks with the National Biological Services banding Steller's eiders at the Izembek NWR in Cold Bay, Alaska. Both experiences were challenging, interesting, and, above all, hard work.

In Alberta, I was a member of a three-man crew of volunteers, all retirees. Each of us had experience banding waterfowl, but none of us had been to Southern Alberta or had trapped waterfowl in short grass prairie habitat. We had all been administrators and, I suspect, had forgotten the amount of effort field work requires. The work was not made any easier by muddy conditions and later a stretch of hot windy weather.

We used 16 large wire-meshed traps set in shallow irrigation lakes along a 100-mile route and banded more than 2,400 ducks of 11 different species. We learned that equipment, weather, access to private land, the whims of ducks, and our ability to work together all affected our results.

At Izembek, I had an entirely different experience. Unlike Alberta, the habitat is coastal, a vast tidal mud flat covered with eel grass. The method of capturing ducks also was different. There, we drove flightless birds to hastily erected traps. Wind direction and tidal flow played a large roll in capturing birds.

The common denominator at each area was thick ankle-grabbing mud. Our two crews included volunteers like myself and both permanent and temporary employees, all of whom were well trained, energetic, and dedicated. In the end, we banded about 14,000 adult female and male Steller's eiders. The work was physically demanding (I am afraid that at times it was beyond my capabilities); and often conducted under adverse conditions. It was not for the faint of heart.

Volunteer work, I discovered, is exhausting but rewarding. I look forward to doing it again this coming summer.

*Dick Smith
Former Deputy Director*



Small Helpers

More than 5,000 Minnesotans, including these two youngsters, flocked to the Minneapolis Convention Center in early February for the second annual "Duck Habitat Day," co-sponsored by the Service and a number of private-sector partners. The family-oriented event, which had a theme of "Habitat is the Key," featured everything from exhibits on wetlands and the National Wildlife Refuge System to an opportunity to assemble birdhouses. Photo by Barbara Pardo.



Information Resources Corner

The Internet has proven to be a tremendous tool for sharing information about the Service and its programs with the public. Since the Service's Home Page (<http://www.fws.gov/>) went online in 1994, usage had grown dramatically. Last October, for example, web surfers downloaded more than 1.1 million pages and graphics.

Based on this experience with the Internet, the Division of Information Resources Management has launched a project to develop a prototype Service Internal Internet, also called an Intranet, that would be available exclusively to Service employees.

Possible features and benefits of a Service Internal Internet include:

- Access to new and existing databases via World Wide Web browsers.
- Better access to Service data for Service employees throughout the country, whether at home, in the office, or on travel.
- Secure discussion areas (collaborative work spaces) for project participants, budget planners, managers, and others not located in the same geographic area.
- The ability to share drafts and sensitive information with a restricted audience via World Wide Web pages.
- Reduced travel costs as a result of on-line conferences and the sharing of expertise electronically.
- Compatibility with the Department of the Interior's plans for Departmental Administrative Systems.

You can visit the project charter at <http://www.fws.gov/~pullen/project/intranet.html>. If you have any questions, please contact Larry Pullen at 703/358 1729 or Al Fisher at 303/275 2320.

Around the Service

New Liaison

Reid Goforth has assumed the newly established position of Research Liaison Officer for the Service. Goforth was previously chief of the Cooperative Research Units with the U.S. Geological Survey's Biological Resources Division. In his new capacity, he will serve as a liaison with research programs outside the Service, especially the USGS's Biological Resources Division, with an eye to meeting the information needs of Service resource managers. Goforth works in the Washington headquarters office.

Approved Shot

The Service has approved the use of bismuth-tin shot for waterfowl hunting after extensive testing showed no indications of toxicity problems when ingested by waterfowl during feeding. Bismuth-tin joins steel shot as the only legal loads for waterfowl hunting. The use of lead shot was phased out in 1991 because large numbers of birds were being poisoned. The Service also has proposed temporary approval of tungsten-iron shot for the coming hunting season, while Federal Cartridge Company completes toxicity testing.

Bird Hot Spots

The American Bird Conservancy has recognized Shiawassee NWR in Michigan and Chautauqua NWR in Illinois as "Globally Important Bird Areas." Already Rice Lake NWR and Mille Lacs NWR in Minnesota have this distinction. The Conservancy also noted that Chautauqua and Detroit Lakes Wetland Management District in Minnesota "meet or potentially meet" inclusion criteria for the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network.

Acting Director's Corner

The Service will have more than its usual share of business before Congress this year with major legislation affecting virtually every one of our programs.

Congress will consider a number of bills reauthorizing the laws upon which many of our programs are based. These bills, in effect, authorize Congress to appropriate money to administer the laws, and, as such, they often can be vehicles for widespread changes in the programs themselves. This does not mean that all the programs automatically expire when their authorization lapses. In most cases, Congress can continue to fund unauthorized laws, although it can be more difficult.

At the top of the Congressional list will be the Endangered Species Act. The Act's authorization ended in 1992, and it has been the subject of intense controversy ever since. The Senate's Environment and Public Works Committee began bipartisan negotiations last year to try to craft compromise legislation. That work will continue in this Congress.

Congress also will consider reauthorizing the transfer of the motor boat and small engine fuel taxes from the Highway Trust Fund into the Sport Fish Restoration Account. These funds are used for grants to the states under the Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration Act for boating safety and wetlands conservation. In this case, without reauthorization by October, the program would be crippled. We expect a reauthorization to pass.

Other upcoming reauthorizations include the Atlantic Striped Bass Act, the Great Lakes Critical Programs Act, and the Great Lakes Restoration Act. In addition, Congress has taken up omnibus legislation affecting the National Wildlife Refuge

System. One proposal of great concern would elevate certain recreational uses to be a purpose of the system on par with wildlife conservation.

This is by no means a complete list of fish and wildlife issues that will come before Congress this year. So you can see it is going to be a busy year.

The Service can play an important role in the legislative process both in formulating positions within the Administration and in informing Congress about the laws we administer. For this reason, the Directorate established a Legislative Committee consisting of three regional directors and three assistant directors, who will serve on a rotating basis. The committee will recommend a legislative strategy for the Service to take on each issue. The full Directorate will make the final decision.

I encourage each of you to keep abreast of these legislative issues and to coordinate any contact with Congress regarding them through the legislative services office. I also urge you to keep congressional members and their staffs informed and up to date on Service programs and policies that may affect their states, regardless of whether any legislative issue is involved.



John G. Rogers



Fish & Wildlife News

Executive Editor: Phil Million
Editor: Hugh Vickery
Associate Editor: Rachel F. Levin

Submit articles and photographs to:

Hugh Vickery
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Room 3447
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240
202/208 1456
Fax: 202/208 5850
E-mail: hugh_vickery@mail.fws.gov

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